

Asheville Transit Commission Retreat
April 14, 2010
The Design Center

Attending:

Transit Commission Members: Georgia Shannon, Tom Tomlin, Paul Van Heden, Kevin Jenkins, J Neal Jackson, Dave Erb, Hanna Raskin.

City of Asheville Transit Staff: Mariate Echeverry, Janet George Murr, Edna Johnson, Yuri Koslen

City Councilman/Liaison to Transit Commission: Gordon Smith

City Residents: Joy Bartlett, David Boshart

The agenda for the day was reviewed:

- Introduction to Day and People
- Minutes and Rider Report
- News from Hanna
- Experience We Bring
- City Council Liaison Report
- Our Purpose
- Historical Scan – Where we have been
- Lunch
- Annual Report and Master Plan Review
- Focus for 2011 Brainstorm
- Outcome Goals
- Selection of 2011 Focus
- Next Steps

Minutes from the March 10, 2010, meeting of the Commission were approved.

Hanna Raskin announced she would be moving to Dallas to take a great new job in Dallas. Commission members expressed their appreciation for Hanna's leadership and dedication. In discussion, it was stated that the ordinance states that the vice-chair becomes chair when the chair resigns. It was decided that the selection of a new vice-chair would take place at the next Commission meeting.

Experience We Bring

In paired interviews Commission members and staff discussed:

A story about a time that you were part of an effort that truly succeeded, a true high point, where things came together and worked in a way that had real IMPACT.

Commission members reported out from interviews on:

Gifts:

- Dedication – Hanna
- Hard work – Edna
- Curiosity and Understanding for experience – Georgia
- Experience/Challenges - Dave
- Overview – Yuri
- Experience in different locations – Joy
- Entrepreneurship – J. Neal
- Passion – Paul
- Love of Transit – Kevin
- Experience with Commission in past/Drove a bus – Tom

AND

What is in place when efforts succeed?

- Team work
- Dedication
- Grassroots
- Focus point/Topic
- Money
- Perseverance
- Organization
- Commitment
- Common ground
- Communication
- Communications/Message
- Compromise
- Leadership

Gordon Smith, Council liaison, reported:

- He ran his campaign for Council on multi-modal transit and wants to be an effective spokesperson for it.
- He wants the Commission to consider if he is the right person for the job since he cannot attend meetings.
- The budget picture is bleak.
- He has worked and been successful in holding the budgets for transit and homelessness.
- Council has questions on why the transit costs keep increasing and when they will level out. The Commission needs to work on its message to Council.
- For multi-modal to work, dedicated funding will be needed.
- Bonds for transit stations will work but funding is needed for maintenance.
- If sales tax is used, the decision makers will need to see its importance, thus we need a message.
- He will be for what the commission thinks is workable and will do what he can to find the path to victory and make it work.

Our Purpose

The Commission reviewed the 1999 Ordinance that defined the Commission's duties and functions.

HISTORICAL SCAN TRANSIT COMMISSION <i>*Key Events</i>	1999-2002	2003-2006	2007-2010
	<p>Commission ordinance</p> <p>*2002 on – Engaged transit commission – GTA, Member elected to council, more citizens attending commission</p>	<p>*Evening Service</p> <p>Top-A-Stop</p>	<p>Major turnover of commission members</p> <p>Commission has set agendas</p> <p>*Fare free</p> <p>City Council meetings</p> <p>Parking proposal</p> <p>New member orientation</p> <p>*Approved TMP</p> <p>*Multi-modal boards and commissions get together</p>
CITY OF ASHEVILLE <i>*Key Events</i>	<p>New transit center on Coxie Ave. (1998)</p>	<p>*Transit friendly City Council (2004)</p> <p>Wooden bus stop (2006)</p> <p>Growth of So. Asheville</p>	<p>Bus wraps</p> <p>Bike/Ped/Greenway Plans</p> <p>Peak ridership 2007 & steady</p> <p>Evening service/night routes</p> <p>*New transit staff</p> <p>Annual passes</p> <p>2009 Council election – all successful candidates are outspoken supporters of multi-modal</p>
FIELD OF TRANSIT <i>*Key Events</i>		<p>New green technology across all these years</p>	<p>White paper/budget deficit</p> <p>Nationwide shift to transit (Smart growth, TOD, SAFETEA-LU, Complete streets, Drop in VMT, Portland)</p> <p>Gas crisis/Peak Oil</p> <p>Economic Downturn</p> <p>Ray Lahood (2010)</p>

FUTURE

2011 – 2014

- *¼ tax
- *The Master Plan Implemented
- Automatic vehicle locator system
- Federal livability policy (HUD, EPA, DOT)
- I-26
- Bringing back trolleys
- 10 new buses
- Instituting transit oriented development
- Growing public awareness of transit's value (including bus fare and mktg.)
- Instituting bus rapid transit
- Sunday service
- Stable marketing budget
- Better street furniture

DISCUSSION ON HISTORICAL SCAN:

What ***relationships*** do you see between the events among Transit Commission, the City and the Field of Transit?

- Better communication between the Commission and City
- Still some separation from City and federal funding sources, e.g. losing the Weaverville route
- Economics
- Relationship between the way the Commission does business, the way the City does business and the way people perceive transit.
- Way transit is being used will lead to bigger role.

What We Went From and To

1999-2002

We went from Authority to Commission.

2003-2007

We went from the time of no memory to growth of Asheville, a transitional period when needs were changing.

2010- 2014, We want to go from and to:

- From It to Thou
- From an Old House to a Renovation
- From Plan to Action
- From Old Technology to New Technology and Design for Infrastructure
- From Private Vehicles to Public Vehicles (Toys vs. Service)
- From Top Down to Bottom Up
- From Individuality to Transit Reflecting Shared Value that Transit is Natural.

From ***Where We've Been, Where We Need to Focus in 2011:***

- On time service
- Master plan implemented
- New funding sources
- AVL and new technology
- Public perceptions of public transit
- Marketing
- Commission reach out to more riders
- Major turnover in commission members

How We Can ***Sustain our Momentum?***

- Keep the commission engaged
- See ideas come alive
- Review of Successes
- Remember our work is for others
- Keep better meeting format
- New ideas
- City and Commission work as a team
- Keep on track

Review of Annual Reports:

The Commission read out loud the 2008 and 2009 Annual Reports.

From the 2008 annual report, continuing action will be needed for advertising and funding.

From the 2009 annual report, continuing action will be needed on bulletin board, partnerships, Master Plan funding, continuing annotated agenda, and Ambassadors.

Review of Transit Master Plan Executive Summary Goals:

- More Frequent Service on the main travel corridors +++
- Marketing to choice riders +
- Improving service to captive riders
- More environmental consciousness
- Target tourism market - - (+major impact on funding)
- Emphasize the health and welfare aspects
- Make transit part of the community lifestyle ++

+ goals commission members are excited about working on
- groan zone

The commission decided that marketing to tourists and emphasizing the health and welfare aspects would be the least likely to be a focus for 2011.

FOCUS FOR 2011:

From an individual brainstorm list, Commission members listed the following possible foci for 2011, and then grouped them into 4 areas and worked in teams to brainstorm outcome goals:

SERVICES/IMPROVEMENTS (OPERATIONAL)

Kevin and Dave

- Revise routes for better services (going before Council 4/27)
- Improving on time service
- Raising frequency of main corridor routes
- Sunday Service

MARKETING

Georgia, Joy and Tom

- Market to get more riders/unfunded marketing (before Council 4/27)
- Ambassadorship (perception of transit, PR)
- Advertising/Marketing to Riders
- Increase rider involvement
- Promoting ad. system to Council and voters

FUNDING SOURCES

Paul, Yuri and Edna

- Exploring Funding Options
- Promoting ad. system to Council and voters

TRANSPORTATION CONGRESS

Hanna and Mariate

- Encouraging City to take more multi-modal approaches – combine various boards and commissions
- Help other boards and commissions with structure

POSSIBLE OUTCOME GOALS:

I. Service Improvements (Operational)

Who is Impacted:

All riders and potential riders

Outcome Goals:

1. Improve on-time performance and basic route structure to make the system more predictable, consistent and aligned with demand.
2. Optimize the system's skeleton/frame to provide strong foundation for future enhancements.

How to Measure:

1. Direct – on time performance
 2. Indirect – mid to long term ridership increases
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II. Transportation Congress

Who is Impacted:

City, staff, citizens

Proposal: Create a Transportation Congress composed of representatives from the following boards and commissions that would function like Planning & Zoning board with review power:

- Transit
- Bike/Ped
- Downtown
- Greenways
- Sustainability
- (Parking)
- (Traffic Engineering)

Outcome Goals:

1. More holistic approach to transportation decisions.
2. Increased collaboration between commissions.
3. More effective boards and commissions.
4. Smarter transportation planning.

How to Measure:

Creation of Congress

III. Funding Source

Who is Impacted:

- Buncombe County residents
- Residents of Asheville and visitors
- City budget
- County budget

Outcome Goals:

1. Increased regional thinking
2. Co-operation between cities and counties
3. Improved transit service
4. Smoother transit across region
5. Better multi-modal habits in Buncombe
6. Improve affordability in region

How to Measure:

- Grass roots support
 - Chamber of Commerce approval
 - Convince political leadership's backing
 - County Commission places ballot in it
 - Popular vote
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IV. Marketing

Who is Impacted:

- Riders
- General Public/Potential Riders
- Transit Staff

Outcome Goals:

1. Trained Ambassadors
2. Advertising with Marketing

How to Measure:

- Increase in ridership

Discussion and Selection of Primary Focus for 2011:

Commission and staff discussed the four goal areas. Based on past experience, Hanna suggested that the Commission pick one focus for the year.

There was strong vocal support for the Transportation Congress which provides a pathway to the multi-modal approach needed for funding and for Service Improvement which is bottom line for riders and for expansion of service.

Discussion pointed out the difficulty of merging boards and commissions and the fact that some service improvement goals are already going before Council on April 27. There was further definition of the service improvement goal as a focus on Sunday Service and the frequency of major transit routes.

A straw poll of Commission members showed that the majority of Commission members supported a primary focus on the goals for Service Improvement (Sunday service and frequency of major transit routes) and a secondary goal a Transportation Congress. Commission members reached consensus on these primary and secondary goals.

Closing Conversation

- Possible titles for today's work:
- From Here to Eternity
- Synergistic
- Route 1

For Next Meeting's Agenda:

- Selection of Vice Chair
- Hanna will write down her role and responsibilities and email it to the group before the meeting for a discussion of how to distribute her work.

The next meeting will be held May 12.

Commission members were reminded of the April 27 Council meeting at 5:00PM.